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PROGRESS REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS INCLUDING LONG-TERM MEASURES FOR COMBATING DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its second meeting in Addis Ababa, 16-19 January, 1984, the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment (referred to below as the Joint Committee), reviewed the implementation of the Environment in Africa work programme as carried out through the activities of the ECA Environment Section of the Social Development, Environment and Human Settlements Division Emphasis was put on the areas of combating desertification, environmental education and training and industrial environmental impact assessment. A summary of the recommendation is made below to refresh the memory of participants.

2. The Joint Committee endorsed the following recommendations and resolutions of the Regional Workshop on Combating Desertification in Africa, held in Khartoum, Sudan, in October, 1982: 1/

a) institutional arrangements for desertification control in the Kalahari desert sub-region, requesting the extension of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office's mandate to that sub-region.

b) programming activities and project formulation for desertification control by the United Nations organs and ECA to cover assistance to member States to develop related programme activities, the idea being that each country's action plan took care of environmental protection in the dry lands;

c) improvement of desertification control measures by the provision of alternatives for local energy supply; here, governments were supposed to prevent deforestation of natural woodlands and encourage local inhabitants to embark on related activities;

d) manpower training for desertification control, including workshops and seminars for this purpose;. attention here would be directed to extension and mass education programmes, technical co-operation, particularly the exchange of experiences on desertification control.

e) financing of desertification control projects through national budgets and international sources; this was supposed to encourage the governments to ensure that adequate financial provision is made in their budgets for anti-desertification programmes; this was also done to emphasize the need for the mobilization of bilateral assistance to back-up national budgetary allocations to cater for the needs of programmes to combat desertification;

1/ E/ECA/CM.10/13: Report of the Second Meeting of the Joint Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements of Environment, January 1984, Annex I, II,III.

f) control of over-grazing and development of alternative or supplementary livelihood systems; this was to encourage rational animal husbandry practices by discouraging over-stocking of rangelands and encouraging the growing of drought resistant varieties of plants that can provide feed for both animal and human populations;

g) extension of the AGRHYMET network in Africa: the aim here was for WMO and UNSO to extend, to the Kalahari desert sub-region, the establishment and strengthening of the agro-meteorological services which they have been developing for the Sudano-Sahelian zone.

3. Also arising from the Khartoum workshop were resolutions on the following areas:

i) Regional co-operation to combat desertification: urging the governing councils of UNEP and UNDP, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), the Southern African Development Co-ordination Committee (SADCC), the Comité Inter-Etat de Lutte contre la sècheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS) and the General Assembly of the United Nations, to request UNSO to include the United Republic of Tanzania in the scope of the present UNSO mandate; it also requested the relevant organs of the United Nations to extend assistance to the SADCC countries of Southern Africa as for the countries that belong to CILSS in the sahel zone of West Africa;

ii) Exchange of information on desertification control, urging African Governments to increase the flow of information and experiences on desertification control and further urging them to actively participate in the information gathering process that was being carried out by UNEP on the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (1977).

4. The Committee also endorsed the recommendations of the ECA/UNEP Regional Workshop on Industrial Environmental Impact and Environmental Criteria for the siting of industries in Africa requesting that African Governments should immediately take precautionary measures for environmental protection in industrial development.

5. The Joint Committee further endorsed the recommendations of the meetings of experts from governments and the scientific community requesting the development of a programme of action for environmental education and training in Africa.

6. Apart from the endorsement of the different recommendations and resolutions of workshops and meetings, the Joint Committee expressed concern in the area of natural disasters and passed a resolution to that effect. It requested for a regional programme for the protection of the environment after earthquakes and the provision of shelter within the context of the International Year for the Homeless, 1985.

7. The areas outlined above will form the subject of the present progress report which will also include any other activities of environmental interest that have been undertaken since the last meeting of the Joint Committee in 1984.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS RESULTING FROM THE SECOND MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1984-1985

a) Desertification and drought:

8. In consonnance with the activities of the Secretariat in the framework of the present social and economic crisis in the continent, desertification control and drought received the greatest attention. Immediately following the second Joint Committee meeting, a Scientific Round Table on the Climatic Situation and Drought in Africa was held in Addis Ababa 20-23 February 1984, in response to ECA resolution 473 (XVII). The ECA Environment Section worked in collaboration with WMO, UNEP, UNSO, FAO, UNESCO, UNRISON and OAU to implement this resolution.

9. To prepare for the Scientific Round Table, WMO sponsored an inter-agency meeting in Geneva, 6-7 July 1983, to make a preview of the meteorological aspects of drought in Africa. In the same light, UNEP also organized a multi-disciplinary meeting in Nairobi, 13-16 November, 1983, on the effect of drought on the social and economic systems in Africa.

10. One of the most important outcomes of the Scientific Round Table was the Plan of Action to combat the impacts of drought on the social and economic systems of the continent. This Plan was endorsed by ECA resolution 499 (XIX) of the Conference of Ministers, April, 1984, on the Regional Plan of Action to Combat the Impacts of Drought in Africa. The resolution urged member States to:

"(a) adopt appropriate measures, including increased allocation of financial resources, and enhancement of manpower and institutional capabilities within the framework of the Plan of Action, to better predict and combat the adverse impacts of drought;

(b) rehabilitate their drought-stricken economies in a co-ordinated and integrated manner;

(c) design and endorce other appropriate policies for the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action in its entirety".

11. Tangible ideas and strategies suggested in the Plan of Action provided inputs for the preparation of the ECA's Special Memorandum on the Economic and Social Crisis in Africa, which was also adopted by its resolution 526 (XIX) of April 1984.

12. Another important outcome of the Khartoum workshop recommendations and the subsequent Scientific Round Table on the Climatic Situation and Drought in Africa, and the Special Memorandum on the Crisis in the region, was the acceptance by ECOSOC, to support the extension of UNSO activities to the Kalahari desert sub-region by its resolution 1984/72.

13. The other outcome of the Scientific Round Table was resolution 528 (XIX) on Meteorological Services to Combat Drought in Africa. This resolution, inter alia, requested the Executive Secretary of ECA to "study with WMO and other concerned United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, the feasibility of establishing an advanced centre for meteorology in Africa or any other alternative institutional mechanism and to submit the study to the twentieth session of the Economic Commission for Africa".

14. WMO has played the lead role in implementing this resolution by carrying out the feasibility study for the location of the Centre and working out the framework of the programmes as well as indicating the financial and material implications. The feasibility report was reviewed at an inter-agency meeting in Geneva on 30 November, 1984. This report was the subject of another report that was submitted to the twentieth session of the ECA Conference of Ministers which then passed resolution 540 (XX) resolving to establish an African Centre for Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) as well as setting out the modalities for its support.

15. Other activities in the area of combating desertification in the region included the extension of the study of the environmental problems of underground water resource exploitation to the Niamey based MULPOC sub-region. A report on the subject was presented to a meeting of the policy organs of that MULPOC in February, 1985. A similar study covering the North African MULPOC provided input into ECA resolution 497 (XIX) on water resources development and follow-up to the Mar del Plata Action Plan.

b) Environmental Education:

16. To follow-up the recommendations of the Joint Committee a project was developed by the ECA Environment Section to incorporate environmental components in the programmes of 11 ECA-sponsored institutions. The project was funded by UNEP under No. FP/3102-84-02(2367): Incorporation of environmental education components into training programmes of 11 ECA-sponsored institutions. The implementation of this project has already begun and is the subject of another report that is presented as document E/ECA/ENV/19: Report of ECA/UNEP project for the Incorporation of Environmental Components into the Training Programmes of ECA-sponsored Institutions.

c) Environmental Protection:

17. Following the Committee's endorsement of the recommendations of the workshop on industrial environmental impact assessment and environmental criteria for the siting of industries in Africa, activities were initiated to develop standards for environmental protection; an expert group meeting was held in Addis Ababa, 10-14 June, 1985 to work out guidelines for developing or strengthening national standards. This was done in close collaboration with ARSO, the African Regional Organization for Standardization based in Nairobi, Kenya. To prepare the background documentation for this meeting, a consultant visited a selected number of African countries, and prepared a report on guidelines for the development of national environmental standards for the protection of the environment. This report was studied by a group of African experts which met in Addis Ababa, 10-14 June, 1985 and proposed the guidelines which are presented as documen E/ECA/ENV/20: Report of ECA/ARSO Expert Group Meeting on the Establishment and/or Improvement of National Standards for the Protection of the Environment.

18. Concerning activities within ECA, co-ordination on environmental matters continued notably with the Joint FAO/ECA Division, Natural Resources Division and the Transport Communications and Tourism Division with whom there has been considerable exchange of comments on related programme documents and joint preparation of briefs for the Executive Secretary. Such a brief was the one for an improved application of space science and technology for accelerated developments in the region.

III. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE 1986-1987 BIENNIUM

a) Drought and desertification:

19. In keeping with resolution 526 (XIX) on the African economic and social crisis, which among other matters, expressed concern about "the deepening economic and social crisis in Africa and its grave implications for the peoples of the continent", programme activities of the Commission have been mobilized to answer to the urgency of the crisis. Consequently, the Environment in Africa Programme being executed by the Environment Section is placing priority in all programme areas that touch on the issues of combating the impacts of drought and desertification; the details of these activities are presented under document E/ECA/ENV/22, which gives the work programme for the 1986/1987 biennium.

20. With regard to the follow-up to resolution 499 (XIX) on the regional plan of action to combat the impacts of drought in Africa, the Environment Section will continue to co-ordinate inter-divisional activities at ECA. It will also continue to collaborate with other agencies of the United Nations system, particularly with WMO, UNSO, UNEP and UNDP, as well as with the OAU, government and non-governmental organizations to monitor

and assist in the implementation of their plans of action. In this connexion particular attention will be paid to seeing that the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD) is established and functioning as stipulated in resolution 540 (XX) on the Centre.

b) Environmental Education:

21. As concerns environmental education project activities for FP/31202-84-02(2367): Incorporation of environmental components into training programmes of 11 ECA-sponsored institutions will continue as outlined in document E/ECA/ENV/22 on the ECA Work Program for the biennia 1984-1985 and 1986-1987; a report will be duly submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

c) Environmental Protection:

22. The programme activity for developing and/or strengthening the implementation of environmental standards at national level will continue, but much will depend on national effort. The level of implementation of the guidelines by member States is important. This response should be demonstrated by the setting up of relevant institutional arrangements for implementing the guidelines as recommended by the last ECA/ARSO meeting of experts and contained in document E/ECA/ENV/20, cited above. This should also be demonstrated by the development of such legislative structures that will provid for the rigorous and effective implementation of the provisions of those guidelines.

23. One of the most effective ways of handling environmental problems is the sub-regional approach, particularly where there is a common denominator in terms of the ecological environment as well as the social and economic development scenario. In this respect the ECA MULPOC sub-regions have provided a strong delimitation for corpera action, particularly when backed by the governmental and non-governmental organizations that fall within its sub-region. Thought should therefore be given to the modalities for a greater use of the MULPOC to co-ordinate sub-regional environmental activities an related arrangements be made with UNEP Regional Office for Africa to see how to strengt the MULPOCs to fulfil this role, if that is the concensus of the Joint Committee.

24. Over the past bienium, interagency collaboration was greatly strengthened by consultations and interagency meeting on environmental matters, particularly within the context of the present social and economic crisis in the region. In this connexion, UNEP, FAO, UNSO, UNDP and the Organization of African Unity have increased their effort For the forthcoming biennium an increased level of collaboration will be initiated.